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the plants. Paxton (Bot. Dict.) instances the var. *alba*, but American authors do not look upon it as a permanent variety.—J. S. HOUGH.

ZOOLOGY.

OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER.—In the December number of the NATURALIST Mr. C. Hart Merriam, in remarking on *Contopus borealis*, states, that he obtained a fine specimen at Easthampton, Massachusetts, and asks if this species has ever been taken in Massachusetts before.

During the past three or four years I have observed each year several specimens of this beautiful flycatcher in the vicinity of Cambridge, Mass., and although I consider this a rare bird with us, I am inclined to think a few breed within the limits of the state every year. I have always observed it in May or June, though specimens have been captured here in the fall.

With us it is a very wary and shy species when it first arrives from the south, frequenting the topmost branches of tall trees, and its mild, clear notes can be heard at a long distance, but at the Umbagog Lakes, in Maine, where it breeds in numbers, it does not show nearly so much shyness as it exhibits during its northern migrations through Massachusetts. I have taken several specimens there in the course of a few hours.

On the 23d of June, 1873, I had an unusual opportunity of observing a pair of *Contopus borealis* in Belmont, Mass. For several days previous I had heard one of the flycatchers uttering its peculiar call from a hillside which was sparsely covered with firs.

On the above date, as I was passing that locality, I again heard the notes of this bird in nearly the same place, and thinking it must be breeding I approached in the direction of the sound, and soon saw the flycatcher in question sitting, in its erect posture, on the top of a small fir tree. I was surprised at the near approach it allowed me, as I was within a few yards of the tree before the bird took flight, though but for a short distance, however, as it alighted on the dead branch of a maple a few yards off, and was then joined by its mate. I then secreted myself in a clump of barberry bushes where I remained for some time watching them.

From the uneasiness the birds exhibited, I was convinced they had a nest in the immediate vicinity, though the locality was not particularly adapted for breeding, but although I searched dili-

gently I was unable to find the nest. I am aware that there have been several nests found in eastern Massachusetts, though this must certainly be its most southern breeding range.

I have thought the species must leave us on their southern migration by the first of September, though I saw one specimen at Moosehead Lake, Maine, as late as the 1st of Oct., 1873, at which period the weather was quite cold, water freezing round our camp most every night.—RUTHVEN DEANE, *Cambridge, Mass.*

THE OLIVE-SIDED FLYCATCHER.—At the close of an article on *Contopus borealis*, which appeared in the December number of the NATURALIST (page 750), I made the inquiry “Has this species ever been obtained in Massachusetts before?” Since then I have ascertained that specimens of it have been collected in eastern Massachusetts by Mr. C. J. Maynard, Wm. Brewster, Esq. and others, and that it occasionally breeds within the state.

In addition to the note previously described, Mr. Nuttall said: “The female had a whistling, oft-repeated, whining call of 'pŭ 'pŭ, then varied to 'pŭ 'pĭp, and 'pĭp 'pŭ, also at times 'pĭp 'pĭp 'pŭ, 'pĭp 'pĭp 'pĭp, 'pŭ 'pŭ 'pĭp, or 'tŭ 'tŭ 'tŭ, and 'tŭ 'tŭ. The male, besides this note, had, at long intervals, a call of seh 'phëbēē or 'h 'phebéă.” It is such a difficult undertaking to represent accurately the note of a bird by means of letters, that no two persons describe that of the same species by the same characters, although when pronounced, the syllables generally give the same sound. Thus Mr. Nuttall's call of 'h 'phebéă is undoubtedly the same as that described by myself as *O whéō*. His imitation of the note of the female bird is most excellent: I have heard it many times and omitted giving it only because I neglected to write it down while in the field, and it will never do to trust to memory for such matters.—C. HART MERRIAM.

MICROSCOPY.

ON THE STRUCTURE OF DIATOMS.—It is hoped that the publication of the following memoranda will serve the double purpose of elucidating the structure of the tests, and at the same time demonstrating the utility of microscopical objectives of exceptionally high powers. The uncertainty of the footing in this unstable and contested ground will necessitate many errors, and may serve as